

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MAY 13, 1896.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. BERRY, from the Committee on Public Lands, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany S. 2923.]

The Committee on Public Lands, to whom was referred Senate bill 2923, having fully considered the same, return it to the Senate with the recommendation that it do pass with an amendment:

After the word "flagging," in line 20, section 2, add the words "and maintain the same."

The Federal jail and hospital at the city of Fort Smith, Ark., is inclosed by an old, irregular stone wall constructed more than fifty years ago. The wall is unsightly and is the cause of the accumulation of much unsanitary matter within the inclosure, endangering the health of persons confined in the prison, as well as the public in that vicinity. The old wall adds nothing to the safety of the jail, but detracts largely from the health and comfort of those confined therein.

The bill provides for the tearing away of this old wall, and reducing the jail and hospital grounds to a block 300 by 295 feet, bounded on its four sides by streets, and that the city shall inclose the said ground with an iron or stone fence, to be built under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, at the expense of the city; and the city is also required to grade, curb, and level the sidewalks around said block, with substantial stone curbing and flagging, and to maintain the same.

The fractional lots separated from the block, reserved to the United States by the opening of the streets, are donated to the free common schools of the city, and it is the opinion of those most familiar with values there that the expense incurred by the city will not be more than reimbursed by the lots donated.

The result of this measure and its importance is well stated by the Commercial League of that city:

*Resolved*, That House bill 7044, introduced by Hon. John S. Little in the House of Representatives, fully and completely represents the views of all our people in reference to opening the streets therein named through the grounds of the old military fort within this city, and in the name and behalf of our people we earnestly urge the passage of said bill, for the reason that the walls of the said old fort are inside the city limits, but outside of the police and sanitary jurisdiction of the city; that said walls are old, dilapidated, and unsightly; that they obstruct the opening of said streets, and are of no benefit to the Government whatever; that the ground necessary for the opening of said streets is of no use or benefit to the Government, and that the opening of the same will not only benefit the city and its school interests, but the Government as well, by having the United States public buildings properly inclosed, and by beautifying the grounds with proposed iron fence and sidewalks.

The Attorney General was asked his opinion, and replied that he was not in possession of sufficient information to justify him in making recommendations one way or the other, and left the matter entirely with the committee untrammled by his opinion.

In conclusion, your committee is unanimous in its recommendations, and entertains no doubt but that the proposed improvement will greatly benefit the Government's property, and will be a permanent benefit to the city and traveling public.